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Cloakless and Daggerless

The Hush-Hush
World of the CIA

Associated Press Writer Sid Moody was assigned to do a story on CIA. He is compiling the information. Meanwhile, he tells of his experiences in trying to get the lowdown on this top secret organization.

By SID MOODY

On a cloakless, daggerless foray to pierce the wall of hush-hush that surrounds the CIA, 007 was not my code name. It was my batting average.

It's not just that every one phoned about the CIA answers by saying "No." The real difficulty is finding anyone who knows enough to even say "no."

For, as Madame Nhu once told me over a cup of jasmine tea while she talked with mother-pride of her daughter's dead eye with an M1 carbine: "I really don't know much about the CIA. It's such a secret agency, you know."

Once a wise old editor of mine told me about the time Alice Roosevelt Longworth was rumored to be pregnant. The capital press corps pulled all its strings, called all its contacts to confirm the rumors with no avail. Finally, a cub, in a flash of insight, wondered if any one had bothered to ask Mrs. Longworth herself. No one had. "Yes, I am," she told the cub. "Isn't it wonderful?" I

Called Direct

Those who forget history are destined to relive it, Santayana said. I decided to drop my disguise and call the CIA direct. It isn't hard. They're in the phone book (351-1100). I got the public relations man who said he wasn't a public relations man any more because his superiors decided the CIA didn't have relations with the public.

"You know," he said after some preliminary nos, "a lot of people have written books on this subject."

"I don't want a flood," I said. "Just a couple of leaks."

The next day the agency called the AP Washington Bureau and asked who Sid Moody was. "Don't tell 'em," I said. A man has a right to a few secrets of his own. The non-PR called me later and said come on out. "Just ask any cabbie." Apparently whatever Sid Moody was, he wasn't a Bay of Pigs.

I asked my cabbie. "You mean that big new building in Virginia?" Fifteen minutes later we were outside a big new building in Virginia. I could tell it was the CIA because a sign, the only one, said "No"—"No Cameras Allowed."

Cars, Cars

Cars were parked all over the place. Old Fords. New Volkswagens. Limousines. They all undoubtedly had poisoned darts hidden in the hub caps.

"This the CIA?"

I asked a young lady in a cloakless tweed suit. "Yes," she said. My first yes. "God bless you, Mrs. Longworth. I hope it's a boy." I cried and bounded into the building.

For all its bashfulness outside, the CIA drops its guard inside where there's a huge mosaic inlaid in the floor that takes two days to walk across. A guard directed me to the reception room which is crowded with the latest magazines and a lot of waiting salesmen types who undoubtedly vend poisoned darts for hub caps. All the employees were wearing badges with their photographs in color.

A secretary appeared and guided me down long corridors bustling with men in business suits and more secretaries. A few bold nonobjective paintings hung on the walls, their meanings as obscure as what went on behind the unmarked pastel doors. I asked her how the CIA could have a bowling league if no one knew where any one worked. She said it was a nice day, wasn't it.

Files Locked

Our destination was a largish office, similar to that found in any big new office building in Virginia or anywhere else, except the filing cabinets had combination locks and red signs saying "secret." On my host's desk where you usually find pictures of the kids or a china elephant pen stand won three sum-

County Fair was a can for papers that are to be burned in one of the building's three incinerators. (Some papers are merely put in a vat and beaten to a pulp). There was a wire mesh over the windows which did not open. (Sometimes, my host said, smoke from the incinerators gets into the air conditioning system and things get a little stuffy).

I recalled that Skull and Bones, a secret society at Yale, once initiated some New Haven firemen before they were allowed into the clubhouse to put out a blaze. "What did the CIA do about a fire?" I asked. "We have procedures," said the non-PR. We chatted earnestly for several hours. The non-PR gave me some non-handout handouts and a copy of Allen Dulles' book on spying. (Do you suppose some one told HIM "but Allen, there've been BOOKS written on the subject?")

Thanks

Ultimately I satisfied myself that if I hadn't learned whether Mrs. Longworth was pregnant, I at least found out she was married. I thanked my host for seeing me.

"We didn't see you," he said (he really did). "We don't talk to the press. You weren't here."

"I wasn't?"

"No."

"I didn't get a book from you?"

"No." (That made returning a book I hadn't received to some one I hadn't met less of a problem).

"Well, anyway," I said, "thanks for the nice time I didn't have."

He accompanied me to the door, and I walked to a cab, taking ever so much care to avoid stepping in front of the hub